

ANNEX 5

Action Fiche for the ENPI South Regional Action Plan 2008⁽¹⁸⁾ MEDSTAT III

1. IDENTIFICATION

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| Title/Number | MEDSTAT III (Statistical Cooperation in the Mediterranean Region, phase three) CRIS No: 2008/020-474 | | |
| Total cost | EUR 4.0 million (EC contribution: 100%) | | |
| Aid method/ Method of implementation | Project approach – Direct centralised management | | |
| DAC code | 16062 | Sector | Statistical capacity-building |

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

The importance of reliable statistics in decision-making was recognised recently by the ministerial conference of the Union for the Mediterranean. Good statistics must be timely, relevant, reliable and comparable. Further strengthening of the national statistical systems (NSSs) is one of the key areas for action in the National Action Plan (NAP) of each of the ENPI South countries. Furthermore, improving partner countries' statistical capacity and information, including information needed to manage aid, is part of the Accra Agenda for Action. Statistics can then be used to monitor the effect of EC-funded action (projects and general/sectoral budget support).

The project proposed aims to consolidate and build on the achievements of MEDSTAT I (1996-2003) and MEDSTAT II (2006-2009). Despite considerable progress in the ENPI South countries towards production of better statistics, much remains to be done to bring the countries up to international and EU standards. The National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) of Morocco and Israel recently signed Memoranda of Understanding with DG Eurostat on continuous exchanges of data, thereby demonstrating their willingness to deepen the cooperation. Other NSIs have also expressed their willingness to sign.

¹⁸ The ENPI South region consists of nine Mediterranean partner countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Tunisia. If the Pre-Accession Instrument (IPA) allows it and provides financial support, the project might be extended in future to the other members of the Union for the Mediterranean that are not in the ENP, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Turkey.

At national level, the NSIs have a difficult standing within the institutional framework. They often lack the human and financial resources to improve and harmonise their statistics, for example via training. Furthermore, funds for conducting the necessary surveys are not always adequate. At national level, different ministries and institutions sometimes compete for responsibilities and budget allocations for statistical work which leads to a lack of cooperation and coordination. Statistics that are produced are sometimes not publicly available or are not disseminated in a user-friendly manner. Political decisions are often taken without referring to available data. One of the successes of MEDSTAT II has been to bring together the different data producers, creating a national statistical system (NSS) with the NSIs at the centre. But this needs to be consolidated to ensure sustainability.

At regional level, challenges occur which are not sufficiently addressed by bilateral action. These include: (1) inclusion and motivation of countries which are less active at international level, (2) sharing experience and best practice, (3) lack of comparability of data within the region and (4) lack of cooperation between countries. Regional cooperation is, however, crucial in fields such as trade statistics to eliminate asymmetries in trade balances and to establish sub-regional (Agadir Agreement) or Euro-Mediterranean free-trade areas.

2.2. Lessons learned

A recent evaluation of the Commission support for statistics in non-EU countries underlined the relevance of the statistical programmes and projects in general and their achievements in terms of improved capacity, transfer of professional know-how and training. Systematic recourse to the technical expertise of DG Eurostat has proved highly beneficial in terms of quality. On the weak side, the evaluation mentioned a lack of commensurate funding, missing links to the overall development strategies and other cooperation activities and insufficient use of statistics for evidence-based decision-making.

As part of the ongoing evaluation of the MEDSTAT II programme, a draft report was submitted to DG AIDCO by mid-December 2008. It stated that, despite its tentative weaknesses, the MEDSTAT II programme has a good chance of proving an overall success. The evaluators therefore recommended that funding be secured for an immediate follow-up programme to avoid any discontinuity. Positive aspects of the MEDSTAT II programme included the international network of statisticians it has established and the data exchange mechanism set up, including the Memoranda of Understanding. Recommendations for a new regional programme included: combining thematic and horizontal activities into a single contract managed centrally; reducing the number of long-term experts by combining related sectors; decreasing the number of coordination meetings while increasing the number of short-term measures; recruiting more experts from the ENPI South countries; more frequent involvement of statistical data users (for example, by conducting user panels); consolidating the process for exchanges of data; continuing publication of the Euro-Mediterranean statistical bulletin; and, finally, supplementing the programme with bilateral technical action. A further regional equipment component was not considered necessary. To ensure sustainability, the long-term objective could be to establish an independent forum for the region's statisticians, possibly in the form of a permanent Secretariat for Euro-Mediterranean statistical cooperation.

2.3. Complementary action

Due to the different situations facing the NSSs in the ENPI South region, countries generally ask for a tailored approach. The EC has begun to respond to these needs with the ENPI, where budget allocations were largely shifted from regional to bilateral action. An overview of other recently finished, ongoing or planned action funded by the EC or other donors has been prepared by DG Eurostat. Links will be established with these initiatives, such as the recently established Maghreb Statistical Conference and the MED-EMIP regional energy programme, in particular its component on exchanging/sharing information and a web portal. The possibility of collaborating with the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS) will be explored.

2.4. Donor coordination

The MEDSTAT III project has not yet been developed in coordination with other donors. However, complementary action is likely, since contacts with other EC-funded projects and other donors, including joint activities, have already been established during MEDSTAT II. Moreover, representatives of other donors will be invited to the next meeting of the Directors-General Committee to be held by mid-2009.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The overall objective is to promote evidence-based policy-making and to foster democratic development by using statistical data in nine ENPI South countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Tunisia).

The specific objectives of the project are (1) to provide users with more and better data on the priority thematic sectors and (2) to make increased use of these data.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

Expected results of the project are: improved statistical capacity within the NSIs and the NSSs; institutional strengthening of the NSIs and NSSs, including improved cooperation within countries; further harmonisation of statistical data in line with European and international standards; consolidation of the data exchange process and further feeding of the Eurostat database; promotion of regional exchanges of experience and cooperation and establishment of a forum of statisticians; more user-friendly dissemination of statistics; and a better understanding and increased awareness of the importance of statistics on the part of the users (politicians, governments, administration, private sector, journalists, universities, civil society, EU bodies and international institutions).

The main priorities of the new regional statistics project were agreed at a meeting of a working group in November 2008, which was made up of representatives of Mediterranean NSIs, the EC, EFTA and EU countries. These priorities will be confirmed by the MEDSTAT II Partnership Group meeting in January 2009.

Priority thematic areas will be agriculture, energy, migration, social statistics, transport and trade. The range of topics within each theme will be limited and focus on regional priorities. Specific short-term action in other sectors might still be necessary, for example on health, business, gender and housing statistics. Statistical indicators will be chosen with a view to using them to monitor the overall development strategy of the country. Thematic activities will be accompanied by horizontal activities on training, especially for trainers, human resources, quality of statistics, classifications, use of administrative sources, dissemination and use of statistics and information systems, including consolidation of the data exchange process. Special emphasis will be placed on increasing use of statistics, for example by organising joint user-producer events and awareness-raising campaigns. Periodic user panels will be promoted. Activities will include workshops, technical assistance missions, study visits, training courses, working groups, data exchange and production of statistical publications. Training is always highlighted as a key activity by the NSIs.

The project will continue to work with the NSIs as focal points within the NSSs, thus strengthening their position in the institutional network. As other producers of data will also take part in the project, interinstitutional cooperation will continue to be promoted and synergies created. DG Eurostat will continue its role as technical advisor to the project and remains committed to engaging with the countries and to publishing the data collected in connection with the project. The number of long-term experts will be reduced compared with MEDSTAT II. They will have to cover several thematic and/or horizontal subjects at the same time. On the other hand, the share of short-term action will increase. Special attention will be paid to recruiting more experts from the ENPI South countries.

MEDSTAT III should enlarge and deepen the existing network of statisticians in the region and will explore the prospects for establishing a permanent forum of statisticians to accompany the Union for the Mediterranean. This could be achieved by, for example, establishing an independent association of statisticians or a Union for the Mediterranean statistical office or by seconding Mediterranean experts to Eurostat, as EFTA countries already do.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Effective implementation of the project depends on political stability and the absence of tension between the countries in the regions concerned. Continuous support from the NSIs and the other stakeholders involved with the NSSs is very likely. Lack of funding for the NSSs and the high turnover of staff in the ENPI South countries, due to low salaries, pose a risk to the sustainability of the results. This risk will be mitigated by establishing effective transfer of knowledge (training of trainers and self-teaching courses) and by proving the usefulness of statistics to governments, leading to increased funding.

Several signs indicate that the proposed project is sustainable. The exchanges of data will become regular and countries will be encouraged to sign Memoranda of Understanding. Joint working groups and interinstitutional agreements within the NSIs and NSSs were set up during MEDSTAT II and are likely to persist during and after MEDSTAT III. The improved quality of surveys, for example as the outcome of

technical assistance missions or workshops (improved design of questionnaires, harmonised methods, etc.), will also be sustainable.

3.4. Cross-cutting issues

High-quality statistics can improve political decision-making to ensure good governance. If freely accessible, they can also be used by citizens to participate in public debate. Production of gender-specific data and consideration of gender-specific issues related to the production process itself will be encouraged. Several of the thematic sectors to be covered by the project have strong links to the environment, for example, energy, agriculture and transport.

3.5. Stakeholders

The direct partners in the project are the NSIs and the other institutions of the NSSs in the ENPI South countries. As producers of data, their interest and responsibility is to improve the availability and quality of data for the general public and in support of government policies. From the user's perspective, availability, accessibility and comprehensibility add to the four main quality criteria for statistics.

The structure of the project encourages ownership by means of a participative approach during the planning and implementation phase of the project (Directors-General for overall decisions and national coordinators for technical work programmes). The NSIs involved have shown considerable ownership during the two preceding MEDSTAT phases, for example by gradually improving the quality of their statistics and by providing an increasing volume of data.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Method of implementation

The project will be implemented by direct centralised management of a single service contract. It builds on the existing management structure established during the MEDSTAT II programme. For that purpose, DG AIDCO and DG Eurostat have signed a Service-Level Agreement clearly setting out their respective responsibilities. The existing network of thematic national coordinators and principal national coordinators in the NSIs of the ENPI South countries will continue its work. The contractor will set up an office in the EU or an ENPI South country.

4.2. Procurement procedures

All contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the Commission for the implementation of external operations, in force at the time of the launch of the procedure in question. The procedure for award of contracts for this action will be open to all natural and legal persons covered by Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.

4.3. Budget and calendar

The overall budget will be EUR 4.0 million for a single service contract. Evaluations and audits will be funded from other resources. The procurement procedure will be launched in summer 2009 so that the project can be launched immediately once MEDSTAT II comes to an end. The contract is expected to run 24 months as from signature.

4.4. Performance monitoring

No standard indicators exist for this DAC sector. Key indicators for measuring progress included in the logframe are (1) the quantity and quality of the available statistical data and (2) the references made to statistical publications and databases. Objectively verifiable indicators (qualitative and quantitative) will have to be included in the methods laid down in the technical proposals.

Internal monitoring will be ensured by regional meetings (directors' committee and national coordinators) and bimonthly meetings of the contractor with DG AIDCO and Eurostat. External monitoring will be ensured under the framework contract for results-oriented monitoring (ROM).

4.5. Evaluation and audit

Expenditure incurred will have to be certified, as part of the obligations of the contracted parties. Final evaluation of the results achieved will be entrusted to independent consultants, along with external audits if necessary. These evaluations and audits will be funded from sources other than the project budget, since no commitment will be possible once the validity of this Decision has expired (the "n+1" rule will apply).

4.6. Communication and visibility

The Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions must be followed. Visibility and communication campaigns in the partner countries will be conducted in collaboration with the Delegations. The project website will be maintained and a newsletter will be produced. Publications will be prepared and distributed primarily by DG Eurostat using existing channels. Special attention will be paid to regularly checking publications, websites and press releases for references to the statistical publications and databases produced.